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## ABSTRACT

The study on which this final report is based focused on selected Micronesian students at the University of Guam who, after receiving their degrees, will return to their home islands to assume positions requiring them to function as intermediaries between the American and Micronesian approaches of life. Interviews with these students and with less-educated fellow islanders were taped to: 1) ascertain which aspects of the aboriginal belief structure, as preserved in oral tradition, have been most resistant to change; and, 2) an attempt to establish if the students are fairly representative of their traditional belief and value system despite their American-sponsored educations. Some of the findings were: that student belief in, and knowledge of the old mythological and cosmological constructs was generally low; that belief was high in magic, native medicine, and spirits; and that young and old alike were receptive to attempts at cultural preservations. The report contains a summary of the study, a discussion of study background, a description of methods used in collection of the folktales, analyses of the oral traditions, 16 references, and a bibliography containing over 100 entries. (GC)

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"Oral Traditions of Micronesians as an Index to Culture  
Change Reflected in Micronesian College Graduates"

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Eau Claire, Wisconsin

March 1, 1972

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## SUMMARY

As administrating authority in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the United States has developed an educational program with a long range goal of training Micronesians to assume the administrative, commercial, and educational positions that in the beginning were held largely by Americans. This study is concerned specifically with those Micronesian students who have been selected on the basis of educational progress and adaptability for college training at the University of Guam, and who after receiving their degrees will return to their home islands, there to assume positions that will require them to function as intermediaries between the program administered by Americans on the one hand and the Micronesian approach to life on the other. Two major emphases have been first to ascertain which aspects of the aboriginal belief structure as preserved in oral traditions have been most resistant to change, and secondly to attempt to establish if Micronesian college students are still fairly representative of this traditional belief and value system or if their American-sponsored educations while preparing such students to cope with outside pressures have at the same time created new problems for them in reference to the Oceanic societies to which they will return after completing their academic training.

The approach was to interview college students, then to travel to their home islands and there interview their less well educated fellow islanders. The bulk of the material was taped and extensive use was made of interpreters and translators.

Student belief and knowledge was generally low in relation to the old mythological and cosmological constructs. Belief was high in magic, native medicine, ghosts, and malevolent spirits of land and sea. Of vastly greater importance was student emphasis placed on the Micronesian way of life, especially with reference to the value system. Ancestral land, kin connections, social obligations, the positive nature of generosity, the negative imput of arrogance-these were the central cores of many oral traditions, and educated and uneducated alike accepted these themes as central to the Micronesian way. The old are distressed that the knowledge of the past is fading. The educated young speak in the rhetoric of threatened identity and point to the cultural disintegration on Guam and in Hawaii. For these reasons, young and old alike are receptive to attempts at cultural preservation.

Some beginnings have been made in making public instruction more relevant to Micronesian culture and less American in emphasis. This has been well received by both traditional elders and the new educational elite. These young Micronesians are politically conscious and think in terms of a united Micronisia. They see in a corpus of common oral traditions celebrating pan-Micronesian themes a device which through education can aid in the building of a stronger desire for a united Micronesia than now is present.

## BACKGROUND FOR STUDY

The area encompassed by this study consists of those island cultures lying between Hawaii and the Philippines, north of the equator and south of the Bonin Islands. Politically this includes the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands and the Territory of Guam and constitutes the bulk of that cultural-geographical entity called Micronesia (Map, Appendix I). The Guamanians became citizens of the United States in 1950, while the inhabitants of the Trust Territory have been wards of the United States since 1945. The little island nation of Nauru and the British-administered Gilbert Islands were omitted from the collecting phase of this work because of transportation problems, but existing collections have made it possible to include them for comparative purposes (Hambruch, 1914, 1915; Koch, 1966; Luomala, 1965).

My research approach was governed by the hypothesis that when a society whose lifeways are tied closely to its oral traditions moves (or is pushed) in the direction of a more technologically advanced way of life, the younger generation assumes greater importance than ever before as that vital connecting link between the folklore of the past and a rapidly changing present. This is especially true in American-controlled Micronesia, where the introduction of a new form of government has been allied to the solicitation of islanders through education to fill the new roles in government, in education, and in the economy. English has become the Micronesian lingua franca and the great majority of English speakers is to be found among those educated since World War II. The field worker cannot help but be impressed with the comparative youth of the personnel responsible for the operation of these island societies in nearly all official or semi-official capacities. Only when one goes to individual villages does he begin to encounter the old, who in the past would have been the prime movers in cultures controlled by gerontocracies made prestigious and authoritative by their knowledge of tradition and by statuses validated by the same tradition.

Nor are the old oblivious to this shift in the power structure. They feel threatened, not only by the erosion of ancient prerogatives, but also by the disappearance from memory and everyday concern of many of those traditions which once lay at the very core of distinctive lifeways. The extent of this concern is to be seen in widespread efforts designed to negate or at least slow down this process. On Ponape, Yap, and in the Marshall Islands radio programs have been utilized to publicize ancient tales. In both Yap and Truk Districts, concerned old men have presented

treasured lore for publication in the Micronesian Reporter (Uag, 1969; Mailo, 1969), and all districts have at one time or another prepared folktales to be used as supplemental reading material in public schools. Old men have been engaged to present oral traditions in the classroom, and in Palau the Office of Economic Opportunity has funded a Palauan History Project as part of the Community Action Agency program. But always the young stand as the pivotal group. They are the new parents, the schoolteachers, the administrators, the preparers of budgets at the funding level, the bridge of literacy between American and Micronesian lifeways. Whatever attitudes this generation holds or adopts in reference to efforts to preserve a distinctive past are crucial, be they sympathetic, indifferent, or hostile.

As a World War II marine, I took away from Micronesia an impression of a docile people, properly cowed by a century of Spanish, German, and Japanese political and economic dominance. Yet a brief decade later, as a teacher of Micronesians on both the secondary and university levels, I was made aware that a new generation was emerging whose bonds with the past were becoming severely strained. However, in the course of my study of the Trukese folktale (Mitchell, 1967), it became further apparent that a great deal of the surface turmoil among what has been called the "political elite" (Meller, 1969), while indicative of the disruption attending rapid culture change, did not necessarily imply a blanket rejection of basic belief-value systems. Many of the Trukese tales collected reinforced through good and bad examples the Trukese way and the informants themselves were quick to point out all object lessons. Totally absent from my student sample was the young rebel calling for an abrupt break with the past.

My return to Micronesia to study further the relation of folktales to induced culture change came at an opportune time. Ever since the United States accepted responsibility for the greater part of Micronesia under the political designation of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, it has been part of long-term planning that through education and guidance a pan-Micronesian feeling would emerge, especially among the "political elite," and that Micronesians eventually would form a self-governing unit modeled after that of the United States. Moreover, it has been tacitly assumed that the vast expanse of water and tiny islands wrested at great cost from the Japanese during World War II would be united in this manner under a native polity friendly toward the United States.

Such optimism is no longer so prevalent. For the Micronesians, 1972 is the year of decision, when a

plebiscite is supposed to be held to determine the future status of the Trust Territory. At this point the Micronesian Congress has rejected the American offer of commonwealth status; there is serious dissension within the Congress itself; and I have found many Micronesians confused as to just what has been offered or what their leaders have asked for. Moreover, recent events indicate that far less pan-Micronesian feeling has been generated than anticipated. Perhaps too much was expected too soon in an area where great physical distances are further complicated by equally important cultural differences. There are several distinct languages and cultural sub-divisions within Micronesia, ranging from the highly Westernized Chamorros of the Marianas District, who want to become Americans along with their fellow Chamorros of Guam, to the more traditional Yapese, who hold tenaciously to many of the old ways, including grass skirts, loin cloths, and stone money. One can speak without contradiction of the Palauan, Chamorro, Yapese, Pohnpeian, Trukese, Kusaian, Marshallese, and Nukuor-Kapingamarangi ways of life; and when one travels within these greater areas he will find the local people making yet more sub-divisions based on island, village, clan, and even lineage.

As I have pointed out else where (Mitchell, 1970), these distinctions are more than academic. Ancient loyalties, animosities, and attitudes based on events real or mythical still govern in many cases one's reactions to his fellow Micronesians. For example, the Yapese are held by many Trukese to be great workers of malign magic who should be approached with extreme caution (and in the Trukese folktale the powerful Yapese magician appears again and again.) Moreover, within Truk District itself there is suspicion (backed by legends) that Trukese from specific localities are not to be trusted.

However, it is not on oral tradition alone that I base my judgment that pan-Micronesian unity is as yet more a goal to be striven for than a reality. The past year's study marks the third time (and the fifth year) in over a decade that I have associated closely with Micronesia's "political elite" in the making. Micronesian students have lived with my family for periods as long as two years; I have served at the University of Guam as faculty advisor to Trust Territory students, and have gone through many times the participant observation routine. When away at school, Micronesians form their Little Palaus and Little Yaps, and within these broad groupings they again further subdivide with respect to caste, clan, and lineage. While there are many instances of inter-district fraternizing, should trouble arise at the student level, sides are quickly taken. There is little soul-searching as to the ethics

of the issue. Blood cleaves to blood, island to island, and culture to culture. When a recent party gave rise to violence and some Palauans ganged up on a Trukese, beat him with a piece of coral, and left him with a broken arm and severe contusions, not enough evidence could be marshaled by the Guam police to press charges. Of greater concern was that for a time the Palauan and the Trukese students were split into two mutually hostile factions.

Far more serious than these student shenanigans are those rumbles on the official level. In February, 1971, the Micronesian Congress passed a controversial income tax bill over the loud objections of the Saipanese delegation, which had earlier introduced a resolution stating that Saipan District wished to secede from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. That night the Micronesian Congress building and the contents of offices in two other buildings were burned by unknown arsonists, destroying important papers and effectively disrupting the Congress's ability to carry on its business. All the while some Micronesian congressmen publicly indicate their unwillingness to continue under the political tutelage of the United States, and others assail the independence-minded, accusing them of economic naiveté or of pride and personal ambition. All in all, the observer is led to wonder just how ready this "political elite" is to rise above parochial interests and to unit in a common cause. As a folklorist, I am concerned with the possible role of traditional attitudes during this turbulent period. Certainly there is aplenty in Micronesian myth and legend to nourish sectionalism and distrust. Some tales proclaim the superiority of the northern Palauans over the southern, others present Yap or Truk or Kusaie as the focal point of Micronesia, and still others celebrate the malevolent nature of the Yapese, the calculated treachery of the Trukese, or the troublesome proclivities of the Palauans. It is to assess the potential impact of such traditional beliefs and attitudes that a major thrust in my research has been to collect from educated Micronesians and to seek possible correlations of attitude and repertoire.

## METHODS

My first concern has been to establish the relationships which existed aboriginally between oral traditions and other aspects of culture, and this dictated a turning to the 18th and 19th century descriptions of Micronesia. Most of this information is lodged within the many volumed reports of Catholic missionaries to their superiors; results of government-sponsored voyages of exploration; traders', missionaries', and ship captains' memoirs; and autobiographies of shipwrecked sailors and deserters. This is the literature ransacked by early researchers into the nature of man, serving as sources for the busy pens of such figures as Adolf Bastian, Sir James Frazer, Leo Frobenius, Friedrich Ratzel, and Edward Tylor.

Although one cannot help but profit in a general sense from the "I was there" quality of such early eyewitness accounts, yet the labor expended reviewing these sources was not richly rewarded. The meager ethnographic information was too often of a general nature, and more important, the few references to oral tradition were usually submerged by those weighty matters religious, economic, or political that brought their authors into Micronesia.

The first broad treatment of the Micronesian folktale was the product of German scholars and grew out of Germany's expansion in the South Seas following Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War. By far the most important of this material is that landmark in Micronesian anthropology, the government-sponsored Thilenius Expedition of 1908-1910 (Thilenius, 1914-38). With that proverbial German thoroughness the expedition members produced sixteen fat volumes (some ran over one thousand pages), eleven of which dealt with Micronesia. Each volume contained at least a section of folktale texts, and some, such as those on Palau, Ponape, and Yap, devoted an entire part volume to the presentation of folktales and songs. Moreover, other narrative material is scattered generously throughout the entire series, wherein, for example, a discussion of canoe building may well include the legendary origin of the first canoe, or the presentation of a native polity may be prefaced with the mythical beginnings of the aboriginal nobility. It is from these exhaustive German studies that I have been able to build extensive files on the Micronesian folktale in the early contact period, a full record from the past with which to compare the folktale of the present.

Unfortunately for such comparisons, American scholars have not continued the broad German approach. One will find

that despite the time, energy, and money expended by government agencies and scientific bodies in Micronesian research, not much lasting concern has been evidenced in the study of the folktale. While one gathers from various monographs that their authors have had occasion to be exposed to and even at times to collect narrative material, relatively little has passed beyond the field note stage. American scholarly activity has run the gamut from handbooks prepared for military use during World War II to standard ethnographies, but with one exception interest in the Micronesian folktale has been either peripheral or non-existent. Even the exception was more concerned with structural relationships between language and culture than with the folktale itself and was limited to five pairs of Trukese-Ponapean stories (Fischer, 1954).

A few anthropologists have followed up their sojourns in Micronesia with works making use of collected narratives. Edwin Burrows published a full length study of Ifaluk chants, a number of which are folktales put into song, and others have published articles containing a few stories, mostly in the JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE (Burrows, 1963).

By far the most important work on Micronesian folktales since World War II is William Lessa's Tales from Ulithi Atoll (1961), in which Lessa compares his limited collection of twenty-four stories with variants from all over Oceania. In so doing, he brings together a voluminous bibliography on Oceanic folklore, introducing too some unpublished tales from the field notes of American anthropologists, especially John Fischer's. Yet such contemporary variants are limited and the bulk of Lessa's work depends upon much older collections. The effect of this scarcity of up-to-date texts can also be seen in Katharine Luomala's "Micronesian Mythology" (1949-50) and Bacil Kirtley's "A Motif Index of Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian Folktales" (1955), in which both writers had to turn to the older German writers for much of their textual material.

This paucity of modern texts made necessary the second and third stages of my study, a broad sample of folktales drawn from educated Micronesians, followed by field trips to their islands of origin, there to collect from those islanders of more limited opportunity.

I made the University of Guam my home base, for here the majority of Micronesians get their college training, and with the exception of Kusaie the major islands are only a few hours flying time away. The first task encountered was the need to extend my bibliography at a more elemental level, for in a routine check of the Micronesian

Area Research Center's holdings of occasional literature, I found numerous folktales, many recently collected, in a wide array of printed, xeroxed, mimeographed, and hand-written sources. Many of these texts had been prepared by native schoolteachers both in English and the vernacular to be used as supplementary reading texts in the Trust Territory Schools, while others represented class projects designed to present collections of popular tales. I found this extensive material very useful, for in addition to its value as a source of variants, it also served as a measure of the relative popularity of certain tales among young Micronesians. Many times I found stories to which I had no reference. I was also able to have some instructors continue the past practice of the use of folktales in student themes, and thereby not only got a fresh selection but, more important to my research, was able to introduce my project to some of the same individuals who later served as informants.

The selection of student informants was governed by a need for breadth. It makes a great difference whether one comes from the island or village where there is a concentration of stores, schools, government offices, and recreational facilities, or from a distant village or island where storytelling is in large part free from imported competition. In addition, most districts contain disparate cultural groups which have to be sampled if one is to catch the full variety of the Micronesian folktale. Ponape District stands as the prime example. Included are the Ponapeans, Ngatikese, Pingelapese, and Mokilese who speak closely related dialects; the Kusaiens who speak a different language; and finally the people of Kapingamarangi and Nukuor who are Polynesian in language and in much of their culture.

Such diversity made the success of my collecting dependent upon finding informants who would not only serve as a source of raw material, but who could also aid me in the search for new informants, in arranging my trips to their home islands, in transcription and translation, and who in selected cases would become collectors themselves.

As illustration of the effectiveness of my student aids, I will outline the work done in Truk and Ponape Districts. I myself interviewed and collected from Trukese, Ponapeans, Pingelapese, and Kusaiens. One informant, Minoru Louis, a Trukese now resident on Ponape, carried it further. He first collected extensively from his Ngatikese wife, who to my knowledge was the only Ngatikese on Guam at the time. Minoru was also going to work with me on Ponape during Christmas vacation, but I had made a

collecting trip to Kusaie and the ship was three weeks late in getting me back to Ponape, during which time Minoru had returned to Guam. Hence, this joint venture was rescheduled for April and Easter vacation. Fortunately, I had supplied Minoru with a cassette recorder and on his own he collected several tapes from the Trukese community on Ponape and from native Ponapeans, whose language Minoru speaks fluently.

Isauo James of Truk was especially prolific. His own repertoire included nearly a hundred tales, and he also collected and translated stories from other Trukese students and from Trukese visiting Guam. Over the Christmas holiday, he made a trip to Saipan, where there is a colony of Carolinians who speak a dialect akin to Trukese. There Isauo stayed with relatives and collected from several old Carolinians, using a recorder he had purchased for this express purpose.

My major problem was one of time, for the tapes had to be checked for accuracy in transcription and for the necessary controlling data, safety copies made and filed, and the originals mailed back to my university. Fortunately my grant provided for the purchase of multiple recorders, and the University of Guam made available the services of its audio-visual department, where I got tapes copied and checked out extra recorders for use on Guam. A good part of this load was borne by my wife who has worked with me on all phases of my study and who also assumed the responsibility for the student aids when I was away collecting. Field trips were adjusted to fit my interviewing schedule, and I traveled to a specific island only after I had completed my interviews for that island. These trips were also planned to coincide whenever possible with school vacations.

In this way one of my informants was able to travel to his home island with me and there serve as an interpreter, guide, and contact. By the time the student returned to school, I could continue on my own. On such field trips I did not attempt the broad collecting done on Guam. Instead, I chose where I would live (which was often influenced by my student guide's village of origin) and there interacted closely with the local people, especially with the relatives of my Guam contacts. This approach allowed me to check out the material already collected and to pick up tales only vaguely remembered by my student informants.

A quick survey of a field trip to Kusaie Island will illustrate the complete working through of this approach. In the process of interviewing Kusaie students, the name

of Morris Wakuk kept appearing, as a man well-versed in Kusaian folklore, as one of the guides and storytellers for the annual high school expedition around the island, and most importantly, as the uncle of one of my informants, Hostino Levaie, who by letter had contacted his uncle about our future stay on Kusaie. I went ahead to Ponape Island alone to arrange our boat transportation to Kusaie, and during Christmas vacation we embarked.

Hostino's relatives met us at the dock and transported us via boat and truck to Utwa village, where living arrangements had been made for me with the Wakuk family. Morris Wakuk and I talked and recorded nights and weekends, while the days were spent in translating the collected narratives and in traveling around the island in the company of Wakuk relatives. In this way I came to see (and photograph) many landmarks that served as focal points for well-known Kusaian folktales: the rock where a deserted woman sat and wept after being left to the mercy of the monster, the cave from which a great lizard used to sally forth to decimate canoe crews ("I'll eat two and let two go"), the stone where a fastidious lady used to lay her vagina to keep it dry while she was fishing (this impression is still there), the channel made by a giant eel seeking her abducted human daughter--and much else, all the time acquiring many variants of those narratives already collected on Guam or in some cases stories as yet uncollected. The end result of this stay was to amass material aplenty with which to compare the performance of Kusaian college students and to assess changes in the Kusaian folktale since the early German collection.

The overall approach was productive. I returned to Wisconsin with over forty reels translated and transcribed, along with the many handwritten variants picked up during daily excursions when recording was impossible or, as often was the case with vulgar stories, where the informant would not allow use of the recorder. In addition dozens of variants were xeroxed or otherwise copied from student collections, themes, local newspapers, and the Palauan History Project archives. After acceptance of this report, the collected material will be made available to those interested by depositing copies at the Archives of the Folklore Institute, Indiana University, and the Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam. A modified edition of this report will be published by Journal of the Folklore Institute, Indiana University.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

First, there is the matter of sheer survival. As to be expected, with the disappearance of religious systems already far advanced in disintegration at the time of the German study in 1908-1910, the supporting myths are also heading for cultural oblivion. Nevertheless in the process one finds room for a partial justification of the Grimm Brothers' theory of folktales as decayed myths, for I have collected a number of stories from college students presented as fairy tales; yet comparison with the German sources reveals them as lively modifications of once sacred narratives. Many other tales present gods reduced to the status of magicians; and fabulous accounts of journeys to mysterious lands in the sky and below the sea keep alive memories of the old tripartite division of the Micronesian universe with paradise both above and below. The mythology of the trickster-cultural hero remains viable in several areas, although the beneficial aspect of such figures has dimmed, while the bag of scurvy tricks played is still fresh in the memory of even the young, no doubt due to the sexual or scatological nature of much of it.

The segment of the old mythology showing greatest vitality is associated with validation of position of island and clans in the native polity or with the ownership of land and the knowledge of special techniques such as native medicine and magical charms, or with the important activities of canoe building, navigation, and fishing. It is also concerning the worth of this material that one finds the greatest divergences in attitude. On islands like Ponape, Palau, and Yap, where the native hierarchies still exist, the attendant myths of justification are well-known and parts of them can be collected from college students. Yet some of these same students do little more than mask their indifference to such inherited claims to prerogative.

Although most Micronesians do not have named genres which distinguish myth from legend, informants show by attitude that such division exists. Those stories I have categorized as myths are rarely told by the young, even if they know them, nor can one collect such accounts from the rank and file in the island villages. They are too important and must be told exactly by the right people. On the other hand, those narratives explaining land features or commemorating outstanding people and events are known and told by all. Each district has a well-known body of such legends that nearly everyone, including college students, will present as factual accounts of past events.

Many of these tales have pan-Micronesian currency, such as the account of the dissatisfied daughter who in her anger cooked her baby sister, or the deserted woman whose son slays a monster and raises both him and his mother to eminence; and informants from Kusaie, Pingelap, Ponape, and Truk have all told of how on their particular island and under a specific rock at low tide a mother deposited her sons for safety's sake, only to forget the magic words of retrieval and lose her sons to the rising tide.

However, great variability exists from island to island or even village to village as to which of these shared tales are true and which fictitious. There is little question about the animal tales. Rat the trickster, the sly hermit crab, the stupid turtle, battles of birds and fish, marriages between birds and humans--most of these fall into the realm of the untrue. Other popular fictional tales revolve around supernaturals akin to ogres, whose cannibalistic appetites are equalled only by their stupidity. Yet such tales are sometimes presented as true, for the belief in malevolent spirits is strong all over Micronesia from the "taotaomona" and the "aniti" of Guam to the "anu" of Truk, "ani" of Ponape, and the "kan" of Yap. As already mentioned, some myths have found their way into the fictional category, and conversely, stories that are considered fictitious by most Micronesians will suddenly appear as origin myths.

An interesting example of this crossing of the fictional-factual line is to be seen in a well-known vulgar story in which a trickster seduces a stupid girl who is made to think her vagina is a wound requiring medical care. On Yap, however, this incident is linked to a myth of brother-sister incest, where the culprits in their enjoyment of the new discovery fail to dig up their recently dead mother's corpse at the proper time, thereby condemning her and mankind in general to old age, death, and the grave.

Indeed, the lines distinguishing the believed tales from the fictional are quite arbitrary, depending on the informant, whose position in turn will be decided by island, clan, and village affiliation. I saw little indication that the educated Micronesian felt any need to reject the traditions of his own people as untrue. In relating a believed story, the student would usually say something like "This is an important story on my island, " and then continue with the account, making no excuses for its content.

At times belief was strong enough so that the informant did not wish to tape a particular story at all. He would

make a few general comments about a narrative motif brought up in the interviewing process and indicate that the topic was much too sensitive for narration. For example, a widespread legend of brother-sister incest punished by drowning was told with reluctance in Utwa Village, Kusaie, where the incident is said to have occurred. Of the rebellious baby-sitter who boiled her little sister, we have a well-known tale usually presented with didactic intent, for after the irate parents break the girl's limbs and throw her out, no one will come to her aid because of the enormity of her sins. However, some Yapese informants felt it best not to relate the story. It "happened in Yap," a specific village is named, and it is in poor taste to embarrass a lineage by publicly exposing the skeletons in its closet.

Significant similarities and contrasts have emerged in the arranging and comparing of this oral data, and no greater gulf exists than that standing between the folktales of the Westernized Chamorros of Guam, Rota, and Saipan and those of the rest of Micronesia. Not only has the aboriginal tale been reduced to the vanishing point, but almost nothing has been preserved in the early literature. The great bulk of contemporary folklore reveals the effects of four centuries of contact with the Spanish, Filipinos, and Americans. Despite this extensive change, the Chamorro is joined with his fellow Micronesians in a firm belief in the existence of spirits and a fear of the possible harm that can be afflicted by them. Most Chamorros accept the existence of the spirits of the ancient dead, the "taot-aomona," and the new stories of their malevolent doings continually arise, since unaccountable happenings, sicknesses, the wandering away of children, strange sights and noises--even embarrassing pregnancies--all can be laid at the door of this Chamorro scapegoat.

There remain also a few isolated stories that bear witness to a common Micronesian heritage, such as fish which eat islands, spirits who form landmarks by dropping stones, and a cursed girl who changes to a fish. Yet aside from "taotaomona" tales, the most vital body of Chamorro folklore is that allied to Spanish Catholicism, with the usual array of miraculous statues of the Virgin, signs of divine intervention, and martyred priests.

The Kusaiens are another people whose folktales show the signs of attrition through culture contact. Kusaie early became the stronghold of the Boston Missionary Society, resulting in the situation that even today the church is the strongest institution on the island. The effects of an unrelenting battle against pagan superstition are

evidenced in the Kusaian folktale, mostly in reduction of repertoire. However, what remains is clearly Micronesian and still flourishing. I have found Kusaian students well-informed about their island's folklore, with their offerings comparing favorably to those which I collected when on Kusaie. The Kusaian distinction is an overall limitation in scope, with many of the stories that were reported by the Germans gone, even from among the old.

With the Palau Islands a contrast exists of a different kind. Of all the people in the Trust Territory, excluding the highly acculturated Chamorros, the Palauans have shown themselves most eager for change. Although having one of the smaller populations, Palau has the largest number of students at the University of Guam. In addition, there is a large number of Palauans who are permanent residents of Guam and more would be if immigration rules were relaxed. A similar move is evidenced away from the Palauan folktale among the educated. My efforts with my student sample brought only modest returns. My student collector, Isaac Renguul, worked for nearly two semesters, yet what he gleaned from his peers varies little from what I was able to collect. Only when Isaac turned to older Palauans resident on Guam did a wider sample emerge.

## CONCLUSIONS

With the exception of the Mariana Islands, these limitations of repertoire do not obscure the overall unity of the Micronesian folktale. I have already pointed out that many of the tales collected have a Micronesia-wide occurrence; and when considered on the level of separate motifs, the interrelationships reach a very high level. While many of these shared motifs bear little resemblance to real life, there is a solid core that by positive or negative example emphasizes those values essential to Micronesian lifeways. There are unfaithful spouses and troublesome in-laws, unwise parents and disobedient children, brothers who betray trusts and children who flee their responsibilities, followed by punishment suitable to the deed or counterbalanced by heroes (often relatives) who perform the culturally acceptable act. Nor were my informants unaware that much of this narrative material was closely related to their way of life. Indeed, many wove into their stories comments designed to explain to me as an outsider the cultural importance of acts which induced and resolved conflicts or added to or subtracted from the hero's stature.

It is on the level of motif that I see the greatest potential of the study of folklore as an aid to the development of that unity which many Micronesians say they desire. While taken separately many tales are parochial in emphasis and divisive in nature; yet their generating motifs and the cultural values they emphasize often rise above specific locality to embrace all of Micronesia.

There are already population movements that have begun to modify the parochial nature of the past, with people moving from small to large islands, from distant villages closer to district center, and even from one sub-cultural area to another. This blending is intensified by the political-educational process, reaching its zenith when the future leaders are brought together as college students. Thus far I have found no student hostile to a united Micronesia. Indeed, they see it as a necessity if Micronesians are ever to attain any semblance of political and economic independence. Nor are these same young men and women hostile to the budding attempts on their home islands at cultural preservation. On the whole, reactions to my plans to produce a book in the Micronesian folktale were favorable, at times to the point that some students offered their aid to make sure that I would not omit little heard of islands from my sample; and many of my informants pointed out that a book of folktales containing

those stories of pan-Micronesian currency could be used to nurture the theme of common heritage that is stressed in Micronesian social studies classes. There is little doubt that such comments are generated in part by the informants' familiarity with a legend series edited for use in Micronesian schools (Grey, 1951), and this line of thinking has been further reinforced by the recent appearance of a social studies book written specifically for Micronesians and replete with legendary materials and illustrations of old Micronesia (Shorett, 1970). Yet the signs indicate clearly that college-educated Micronesians would like to work more of their folklore and culture into their formal educational system. If such plans are carried out, one has a preview of new functions for old tales in a Micronesia moving rapidly toward a future where story telling must compete even more with radios, movies, and books. For the folklorist there will be unlimited opportunities for study as a viable body of folklore takes on new forms, functions, and meanings through growing use in programs fostering cultural preservation and political unity. For the administering authority the message is clear. Micronesians want their education to be culturally relevant and the Shorett book should be only a beginning.

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**TRUST TERRITORY  
of the  
PACIFIC ISLANDS**

OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER  
 DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR  
 DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR'S REPRESENTATIVE  
 UNINHABITED

**MARSHALL ISLANDS DISTRICT**  
**AREA** 69.84 Sq. Mi

**MARIANA ISLANDS DISTRICT**  
**AREA 183.50 Sq. Mi.**

**PONAPE DISTRICT**  
**AREA 175.68 Sq. Mi.**

## EASTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS

**EASTERN CAROLINE ISLANDS**  
**PALAU DISTRICT**  
**AREA 179.35 Sq.Mi.**

## VICINITY MAP

25 NAUTICAL MILES

27